# A Tribute to an Educator, Horace Mann

by Mary Gilmore

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A Thesis in Didactics

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Thesis of Mary Gilmore B.A.

# Tribute to an Educator.

Our educational system has reached such a state of perfection never before attained, and the aims of education are better understood than in previous history. We will not say our institutions are perfect for, "it is of human institutions as of men, not any one is so good that it can not be made better." The question then arises, why our boasted state? It is only in comparison with the past, our progress over that, that we can boast, glancing back but half a century we can realize the changes.

Perhaps standing prominent before all other states is that of Massachusetts -and with it, its great pioneer, Horace Mann

claims our attention. This state, that contains the oldest College in America, whose people liberally endowed their beloved Harvard two hundred years ago; built it almost before they built for themselves homes; nourished it when they were akin to starvation; established it for a perpetual existence when their own local government was on the "ragged edge of destruction". With this noble beginning did their progeny keep pace? Far from it! Early in our century we find them a grasping penny-wise throng, yea, and an undemocratic throng opposed to reform. Grasping, for they would not purchase apparatus for Common School purposes. Undemocratic, for they patronized private schools allowing their public institutions to go uncared for. Not reformers, for they were en-

begging instead of improving their so called popular education.

But Horace Mann as he looked upon it all did not say "Behold it was very good." For it was not so good but what it could be made better. The schools were disconnected, no harmonious concerted action, each labored in his own field, isolated from others, they did not meet and compare plans, sent no reports to a bureau to be compiled, all this is the result of our educator Horace Mann. They lacked in having opportunities to study for their profession until he organized for them the Normal Schools.

In speaking of Mr. Mann as an educator we speak of what was his life work; for, that cause above all others aroused into action all his powers. He was always inter

cted in reforms but in no cause in which
his duties as citizenship involved him,
did he spend so much of his strength
and so much of his time. He included
perhaps more in the word education than
many of our short-sighted teachers. In his
Lecture on the Necessity of Education in a
Republican Government, we find his under-
standing of the term; — "I Lastly need to
say, that, by the word Education, I mean
much more than an ability to read and
write and keep common accounts. I com-
prehend, under this noble word, such a
training of the body as shall build it up
with robustness and vigor, — at once pro-
tecting it from disease, and enabling it to
act, formatively, upon the crude substances
of Nature, — to turn a wilderness into

cultivated fields, forests into ships, or granite and clay pits into villages and cities. I mean, also, to include such a cultivation of the intellect as shall enable it to discover those permanent and mighty laws which pervade all parts of the created universe, whether material or spiritual. This is necessary, because, if we act in obedience to these laws, all the resistless forces of Nature become our auxiliaries, and cheer us on to certain prosperity and triumph; but, if we act in contravention or defiance of these laws, then nature resists, thwarts, baffles us; and in the end, it is just as certain that she will overwhelm us with ruin, as it is that God is stronger than man. And, finally, by the term education, I mean such a culture of our moral affec-

trine and religious susceptibilities, as in the course of Nature and Providence, shall lead to a subjection or conformity of all our appetites, propensities and sentiments to the will of Heaven."

In assisting the human race to attain to this end the greater part of Horace Manns life was spent. It was a Herculean task — was it a Hercules that did it? A Hercules in intellect and willingness, but not in physique. He was often in no condition to travel and lecture and after completing his arduous tasks he would forlapse to ill for weeks. His death was brought on by an unusual series of duties. The thought arises was the cause worthy of the effect on the motor? — a sacrifice of a life? And such a life! So much moral courage and mental might might

has been used in some less living way. He chose a calling that was largely filled with oppositions and irritations. But, taking it matter of fact — on the other hand, we all work, more or less assiduously according to our temperaments and it is grander and more noble to have an unselfish end in view than such ends as many of us have. "The time that comes to us is soft and yielding; like wax we can shape it as we please: We take it, or perhaps scarcely take it; as it passes we give it a touch, or a careful, prayerful moulding: and now it is adamant. Yes, it is beyond miracle-working power; Omnipotence can not alter it or modify it, how wonderful! Now nothing so flowing, so ductile, so shapeable; now all that calls itself might on earth or in or beyond

the starry Universe cannot color it with a new tint, or give it an new attitude. It is eternal! All that we could wish to do to our subjects life would be to have given it a happier tint by a more genial appreciation of his 'attitude' All is well, forever. As Horace Mann says of a colleague — "There is no place so good to die in as at the post of duty," and in the same connection he quotes, —

"Whether on the gallows high,
Or in the battles van,
The fittest place for man to die
Is where he dies for man."

The temperament of Mr. Mann seemed to eminently qualify him for an educator. He had such great love for humanity, he felt so keenly the sufferings of others; he sympathized with the little ones as well as the older

ones. He had a great personal influence, a magnetic force over those with whom he came in contact. Overall his being his conscience reigned supreme. As might naturally follow he was a successful teacher occupying a position as tutor in Latin and Greek at Brown University. His childhood was spent in the country and at a country school, so from personal contact he knew the circumstances of rural school life. He took highest honors of his college, was the cleanest thinker among the law students and afterwards occupied a high and lucrative position among the contemporaneous lawyers. He was member of the state of legislature being speaker of the senate for several years. He relinquished all this to take a humble place that of Secretary of the Board of Education where he spent

a dozen years of his prime.

The duty of the Board was to improve the Common school system. As they found it, it had degenerated in practice from the original intention of the Pilgrim Fathers. Common and equal opportunities for all was the primitive idea but the schools had been allowed to run into neglected schools for the poorer classes, for, as wealthier and better educated citizens turned away from them, the best talent and education were not secured to carry them on. Mr. Mann's wish was to restore the good, old custom of having the rich and the poor educated together and for that end he wished the schools to be as good as possible, so that the rich and poor would not be coincident with the educated and the ignorant.

Of the work of regeneration Horace Mann says,—: "Whoever shall undertake that task must encounter privation, labor, and an infinite annoyance from an infinite number of schemers. He must condense the steam of enthusiast, and soften the rock of the miredelour. What toil in arriving at a true system himself! What toil in infusing that system into the minds of others! How many dead minds to be resuscitated! How many prurient ones to be soothed! How much of mingled truth and error to be decompounded and analyzed! What a spirit of perseverance would be needed to sustain him all the way between the inception and the accomplishment of his objects! But should he succeed what perpetuity of blessings he would confer! How would his beneficial influence upon mankind widen and deepen

as it descended forever!

It was much as he anticipated, — "Ah me", he exclaimed, "I have hold of such a large mountain, there is much danger that I shall break my back in trying to lift it! To have any ill feeling would turn apathy into hostility; and as for despondence, the cause is so glorious that it must dispel that." In another page of his journal he writes: "To make an impression in regard to schools is like attempting to batter down Gibralter with one's fist." "The edifice is not only to be reared but the very materials out of which it is to be constituted are to be grown. Can I grow them? that is the question. I in part, perhaps, may be the answer. Some one else may arise to form them into a noble and everlasting temple. This may be the labor, and another's the honor. Well,

if I knew the work would go on when my labors cease, I would not touch the ease of ultimate honor. Give me the certainty that the cause shall succeed, and I will waive all question about honor; nay, even in the uncertainty whether it will succeed at all, it shall have my extremest exertions."

As Secretary of the Board Horace Mann travelled over every county while the schools were in session, holding conventions for teachers, members of School Committees and the citizens, to discuss methods and infuse an interest: no partizanship was ever dragged in. He compiled and had published annual Abstracts of the School Returns. He delivered before the Board his annual Report stating the needs and the evils of the schools. He edited a school Journal, a periodical that

fully answered the purpose for which it was established. It was continued for ten years and contains not only Mr. Mann's best thoughts upon all the topics treated in it, but all the Annual Reports made to the Board during his secretaryship. Friends contributed valuable papers to it also. It is a work which has been sought by those interested in education all over the world, even in the heart of Asia.

The common school, Mr Mann considered a panacea; an article in the Journal appeals, "To the patriot, then, who desires the well being of his nation; to the philanthropist, who labors for the happiness of his race; to the Christian, who includes both worlds in his comprehensive survey, — is not the path of duty to rear new institutions, or to give new

efficiency to old ones, for the diffusion of useful knowledge, for the creation of intellectual ability, for the cultivation of the spirit of concord; for giving to those who are to come after us better means of discovering truth, higher powers of advocating it, stronger resolutions of obedience to it, than we have ever enjoyed, possessed, or felt?" ..... "The common school is the institution which can receive and train up children in the elements of all good knowledge and of virtue before they are subjected to the alienating competitions of life. This institution is the greatest discovery ever made by man; we repeat it, the common school is the greatest discovery ever made by man. In two grand, characteristic attributes, it is supereminent over all others: first, in its universality, for it is capacious enough to

receive and cherish in its parental bosom every child that comes into the world; and, second, in the timeliness of the aid it proffers,— its early seasonable supplies of counsel and guidance making security anticipate danger. Other social organizations are curative and remedial: this is a preventive and an antidote. They come to heal diseases and wounds; this, to make the physical and moral frame invulnerable to them. Let the common school be expanded to its capabilities, let it be worked with the efficiency of which it is susceptible, and nine-tenths of the crimes in the penal code would become obsolete; the long catalogue of human ills would be abridged; men would walk more safely by day; every pillow would be inviolable by night; property, life, and character held by a strong

er tenure; all rational hopes respecting the future brightened." In simpler more direct words the object was to give to every child "a free straight-forward solid pathway, by which he could walk directly up from the ignorance of an infant to a knowledge of the primary duties of a man; and would acquire a power and an invincible will to discharge them". Though Massachusetts Common Schools, nor any others, have reached Mr. Manns high ambitions for them, they were greatly improved under him. indeed, they received a lasting benefit.

Another one of his efficient works was the founding of the Normal Schools; which he felt were to be the nurseries of true teaching and having the foundation solidly built, the whole common wealth would be rightly established.

The Normal Schools were to fit men and women for the greatest of all labors, he compares a teacher's labors with that of an Artist's. "If it costs the artist so much labor, such sleepless study, such vehement strivings, to draw the outline of form with such wonderful exactness, to color the space within the outline with ~~such wonderful~~ such exquisite skill, so that a mere trembling of his hand in the delineation, the slightest failure in the touch of his pencil, would mar the beauty of his productions,— if all his toil and care and dexterity are requisite to make a dead image, a lifeless, thoughtless, soulless copy of a soul, how much more toil and care and judgment are demanded in those who have the formation of the soul itself!"

To found schools to prepare one to fill these im-

portant missions he visited members of the legislature to obtain appropriations, and he gave liberally of his own resources. He searched for principals for the schools always personally saw to their appropriateness. The results were worthy of the effort, as the Normal School & training was a success.

To find plans for improving the schools Mr. Mann travelled in Europe; especially in Germany he hoped for enlightenment. He found the Normal Schools very efficient in Saxony and Prussia. Of Germany Belgium and the British Isles, the Government had their church doctrines taught much to the disgust of this worthy visitor. But in Massachusetts, with his effectual assistance, — now in all the states, — Sectarianism is entirely excluded out.

Another theme of Horace Mann's was no corporal punishment, from his very sympathetic nature he could not think of children suffering always under a shadow of fear. He writes "Fear is one of the most debasing and demoralizing of all the passions. ..... Pleasurable emotions should never be associated with what is to be despised, toiled for, loved. If a child appetizes his tasks then lesson getting is free labor. If he revolts at them, then it is slave labor."

The writings of Horace Mann are full of practical suggestions for a teacher. His aspirations for women are encouraging; he did not agree with those who think women's rights mean a right to do as she pleases, but he desired for her a useful career and had faith in her equal ability with men to follow

professions, the profession of teaching in particular. It was his opinion, that the divinely appointed mission of woman is to teach, and it was his wish to introduce her into every department of instruction as soon as it could be done with good effect. He had watched teaching long enough to know that, other things being equal, woman's teaching is more rapid, more extended and thorough than man's; and that to equal intellectual advantages, that of moral culture, which should never be divorced from these, is more surely added thereby; and that this grows out of the domestic traits, which are not marred by this use, but only thus directed to the noblest ends.

We now have many coeducational institutions, and in the founding of these institutions "our education" was foremost. At

Antioch College in Ohio, he spent the last six years of his existence, from 1853-59. Financially the College was not sustained but co-education was proved to be an elevation to both sexes, overcoming women's frivolities and men's lack of refinement. With the love of education there was love of true universal freedom; two sessions he spent in Congress for advocating emancipation of the slave. He was arraigned on the side of temperance. He was one of the founders or reformers of our institutions for the blind the deaf and the insane.

All these ~~stand~~ humane institutions as well as our grand system of Common Schools Normal and coeducational Colleges stand as eternal monuments of the work of this one man.

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